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ABSTRACT

This newsletter focuses on three activities of LaGuardia Community College: the formation of a Center for At Risk Students; the college's International High School (IHS), a collaborative program that serves high school students who are high-risk because of their limited English proficiency; and "Exploring Transfer," a two-year/four-year college collaborative effort to increase the number of urban and minority transfer students. One of the first activities of the Center for At Risk Students was a survey of 2,300 institutions and schools regarding programs for at-risk students. Responses from 220 institutions with at-risk programs revealed that: (1) 52% of the programs were offered by community colleges, 65% were in urban locations, and 66% had commuter populations; (2) rural institutions received only 64% of the funding per pupil for at-risk programs that urban and suburban institutions received, and public institutions received only 38% of the funding of private institutions; and (3) respondents expressed needs for additional funding, staffing, faculty training, and teaching materials. The section of the newsletter on IHS traces the growth of the school from 56 students in 1985 to 417 students in 1988-89; offers a profile of IHS students and faculty; and explains admissions requirements. In addition, program outcomes are noted including 90% average daily attendance rates, 3.9% dropout rates compared to a citywide average of 30%, a 90% graduation rate, and a 100% college acceptance rate. The final section of the newsletter describes "Exploring Transfer." The aim of the program is to forge new connections between public and private educational institutions, between two- and four-year colleges, among faculties in different disciplines, and between previous experiences and future possibilities. Thus far, the program has achieved its primary objective of increasing transfer rates, with at least 70% of the first cohort transferring. (JMC)

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THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS: CENTER FOR AT RISK STUDENTS

by Janet Lieberman

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SC 200087

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THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

CENTER FOR AT RISK STUDENTS

NEWSLETTER

December, 1989 VOL. I

Recently, the Pew Charitable Trusts awarded LaGuardia Community College $200,000 to set up a Center for At Risk Students to be directed by Dr. Janet E. Lieberman, Director of the Office of High School/College Articulation at LaGuardia Community College in New York. At Risk Students include:

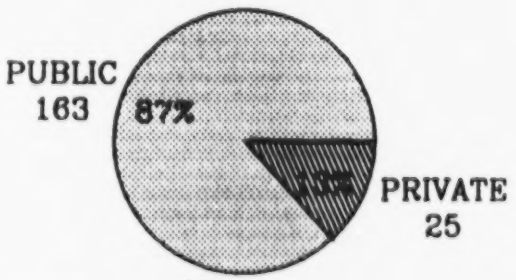
1. students with excessive absences;
2. students who are overage in grade level;
3. students with multiple failures;
4. students with a lack of English proficiency;
5. students with serious family problems;
6. substance abusers.

Part of the Center's program is to gather information about innovative programs serving at risk students and to establish a network of interested institutions. LaGuardia will then disseminate nationally information needed to develop effective programs. In June, 1989, the Center surveyed 2300 institutions and schools seeking information about programs designed to address at risk students.

As of September, 1989, the Center had received 254 responses. Thirty-four of these had no programs for at-risk students and none in the planning stage. They were, therefore excluded from the data tabulations. 220 institutions from 31 states and 3 territories generated the following information.

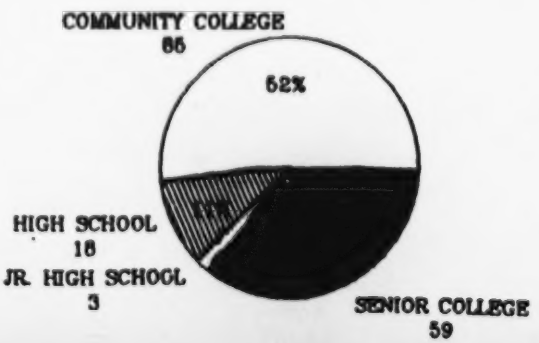
The pie charts present data regarding the status, level, type, and location of the institutions who participated in the survey:

STATUS
Distribution of Schools



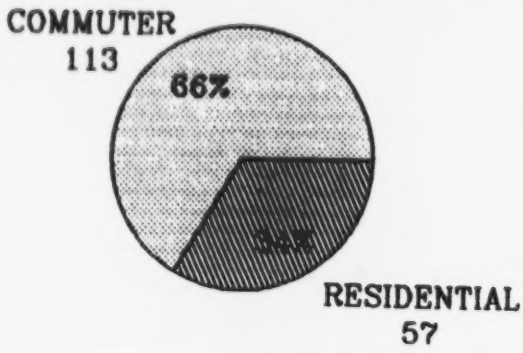
87% (or 163) of those responding are public institutions while 13% (or 25) are private.

LEVEL
Distribution of Schools



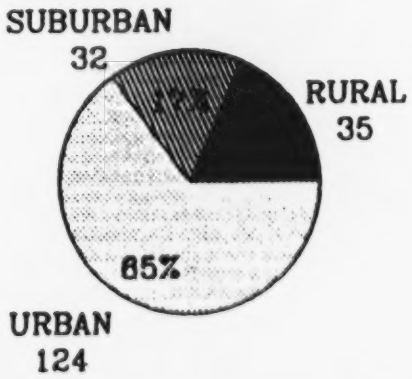
52% of respondents (or 85) are on the community college level; 35% (59) are senior colleges; 11% (18) are high schools; 2% (3) are junior colleges.

TYPE
Distribution of Schools



66% (or 113) have commuter populations; 34% (or 57) serve resident students.

LOCATION
Distribution of Participating Schools



Of those participating in the survey, 65% (or 124) are in urban settings; 18% (or 35) are in rural settings; 17% (or 32) are in suburban settings.

The programs listed include college collaboratives, programs specifically for bilingual students, student support and academic services, remediation programs, drug education/treatment, EOP, SEEK programs.

Interestingly, while the average sizes of entire institutions tended to vary depending on the setting (rural, urban, suburban) the percentage of students participating in at-risk programs does not differ widely. The average size of the student bodies at the colleges in urban settings is 31,700 with 10% of the students participating in special programs. This compares with 13.1% of students in suburban colleges (average population: 6,700) and 12% of students in rural colleges (average population: 7,900).

There were differences, however, among the amounts of funding allocated to these institutions per pupil in at-risk programs. The amounts received by urban and suburban institutions are relatively equal. Rural institutions, however, reported receiving only 64% of what their urban counterparts do. The number who responded to this survey question with specific dollar amounts was small: 37 urban institutions, 12 suburban, and 19 rural. It remains to be seen whether or not these figures will be borne out once greater numbers of institutions report their dollar figures.

The data revealed a similar disparity in funding levels between public and private institutions. Fifty-six public institutions on average reported receiving $536 per pupil in at-risk

programs. This is only 38% of the $1,394 reported by 10 private institutions. Again, the sample size of those responding in specific amounts is small, but the figures are striking and will be reviewed as more data comes in.

A correlation also exists between the characteristics used by schools to describe their at-risk students, the types of interventions employed, and the types of funding they receive. Schools most frequently consider at-risk students to be "poorly prepared academically", "poor academic performers", and low in income. The most frequently used intervention strategies are remediation and counseling by peers and professors. Funding is most frequently allocated for remedial programs. This raised crucial questions about the determining role funding sources play in characterizing the description of needs for at-risk students. This may omit other influential factors such as students' descriptions of themselves, or the actual experiences of faculty in teaching at-risk students.

The needs most often cited by institutions regarding their at-risk programs are funding, staffing, faculty training and teaching materials. Most frequently, institutions indicated that the Center for At-Risk Students could best serve them by generating an information exchange network.

Following the compilation of the data, the Center's Advisory Board met in September and October to review the results of the survey and to make procedural recommendations. The board members include:

Jacqueline Danzberger of the Institute for Educational Leadership

Carmen Ortiz, Vice President, Financial Planning, American Economic Planning Group, Inc.

Carol Stoel, Director, American Association of University Women Educational Foundation

Uri Treisman, Professor, University of California -Berkeley

Harold Wechsler, Editor, Higher Education Publications

Willie Herenton, Superintendent, Memphis City Schools

Participants discussed the definition of "at-risk" and how this is effectively met or not by interventions used by our colleges and high schools. Often, the different perspectives of administrators, teachers, counselors, funding sources, and students of what "at-risk" means affects the program efficacy. Perhaps, instead of focusing on who is not "making it" in the educational system, educators need to ask who is succeeding and why. Knowing what types of students make good use of the systems already in place helps to identify the needs of the at-risk population at the instructional level. Our advisors agreed that we need ways to recommend institutional changes and develop standards of good practice.

The group concurred that the "at-risk" student can and must be identified earlier than high school in order to effect change in dropout rates. Some experts think we can identify these students at third grade.

Most students who drop out of school make their decision by the end of junior high school. The focus of prevention should concentrate on the age group between 11 and 15.

To acquire more useful data the Center will generate a mailing of the survey to secondary and junior high schools nationally. In addition, the Center will resurvey the original institutions who have not responded as of October, 1989.

Meetings of the Advisory Board recommended that a series of eight to ten issues of a newsletter be produced, each dealing with a topic related to at-risk students. College transfer from two-year to four-year colleges is the focus of the issue. Two case studies of successful innovation at different levels follow: the International High School at LaGuardia Community College and the Vassar College Summer Transfer Program.

Subscribers are invited to contact the Center regarding problems which generate interest for their particular student populations. Ultimately, the Center intends to connect subscribers to appropriate consultants through an electronic bulletin board.

We also welcome any comments or questions readers would like to send us regarding our discussion of the definition of "at-risk students." We are seeking correspondence and information exchange. Your ideas and experiences of who defines "at-risk" and upon what criteria, will be instrumental in the development of a functional definition that can help us serve the needs of these students. Correspondence may be sent to:

The Center for At Risk Students
at LaGuardia Community College
31-10 Thomson Avenue, SB65
Long Island City, NY 11101

INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

The International High School (IHS) at LaGuardia Community College in New York is a collaborative program that serves high school students who are high risk because of their limited English proficiency (LEP). In 1984 a group of nationally prominent educators under the direction of Janet E. Lieberman, founder of the Middle College High School at LaGuardia, and Cecilia Cullen, Middle College principal, designed an integrated program to educate students in grades 10 through 12. The program meets all New York City Board of Education requirements for a high school diploma. It includes a mandatory three year sequence in career education based on the tradition at LaGuarida Community College and a decade of experience at the Middle College High School. IHS offers extensive guidance services in the homeroom or "house" structure in which all faculty and staff serve as personal and academic advisors. Specific to its population, the IHS curricula emphasize English language acquisition in all content areas using collaborative learning techniques.

The school opened in 1985 with 56 students. It has grown incrementally over the past three years and in 1988-89 is at full capacity with 417 students. They represent 37 countries and speak 32 languages other than English. They currently range in age from 14-21 years old, with the inclusion in September, 1989, of a ninth grade class. Most are referred to the program by the guidance counselor at the neighboring junior high school. These students vary widely in English language proficiency, native language ability, literacy skills, and prior academic preparation.

For admissions consideration, students must have resided in the United States for fewer than four years; they must score below the 21st percentile on the English version of the Language Assessment Battery, indicating limited English proficiency; they must be classified by a referring guidance counselor or the New York City Board of Education's Office of High School Admissions as a student who requires an alternative educational environment to reach full potential. They are characterized as "high risk" because their recent arrival in the United States and limited English proficiency make them unable to adapt readily to the high school structure and to learn effectively.

The high school is situated on the college campus. Students and staff have full use of the college library, media center, computer labs, gym, and cafeterias. Qualified students take college courses that merit both high school and college credit with a grade of "C" or better. Adjunct college instructors have taught courses at IHS in government, art, and mathematics. A team of high school teachers taught math together and three high school teachers have taught courses at the college.

All full staff members are licensed and certified Board of Education personnel. Many of them came from schools, or from assignments outside the classroom. In 1985, the faculty consisted of 14 teachers, 2 guidance

counselors, 3 educational assistants, 1 family worker, and 1 school secretary. The principal and assistant principal selected them from a list of candidates recommended by a Faculty Personnel Committee, applying the following criteria: knowledge of subject matter, expertise, evidence of professional involvement, cross-cultural sensitivity, and proficiency in language other than English.

Six new teachers joined the staff in 1987-88. Currently, the teaching staff includes 3 guidance counselors, 5 paraprofessionals, 4 ESL specialists, and 16 content area teachers. They represent an unusual cross section of cultures, languages, ages and backgrounds. All are qualified ESL teachers, and all speak more than one language. The present staff has fluency in 11 languages other than English, including Spanish, Chinese, Korean, French, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Russian, Greek, Dutch, Italian, and Yiddish.

To prepare for the opening of IHS in September of 1985, staff from LaGuardia Community College, the Middle College High School and ESL consultants conducted a three week series of staff orientation and training sessions. In the first week, participants focused on the background of IHS and current thinking in ESL. During the second and third weeks, this theoretical background formed the basis for curriculum development for the coming year. Faculty used an Integrated Skills Reinforcement approach, which infuses work on the communicative skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening into all content areas and classroom activities.

As the year progressed, teachers recorded their work with students in journals which served as aids in revising curricula and lesson plans. Following that year, IHS held a ten day Staff Training Curriculum Institute in the summer of 1986 that explored linguistic theory, second language acquisition strategies, cross-cultural factors that affect learning styles, interdisciplinary and collaborative models of curriculum and instruction. Participants wrote three week units of instruction in the areas of social studies, comparative literature, science, mathematics and career education which reflected insights gained from the theoretical sessions, and served as models for the use of ESL methodology to communicate course content. In the fall of 1986, teachers used these units and prepared videotapes of the units in action as well as introducing Integrated Learning Centers which build English language skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening to reinforce subject area study. In the spring semester, faculty collaborated on a curriculum manual entitled: English Language Acquisition through Content Area Study: A Resource Guide for Teachers of Limited English Proficient Students in the High Schools. In June, 1987, the faculty of The International High School hosted a citywide conference for teachers of high school LEP students, to introduce and disseminate the publication. Also as part of faculty development for the second year, original consultants and other linguistics experts were invited to observe the program in action and help plan for the future.

During the first three years, there were impressive

results in the areas of student retention and academic achievement. Annual average daily attendance rates have exceeded 90% in comparison to an average daily attendance rate for New York City's public high schools of 78% in that period. The dropout rate over three years has been 3.9%, in contrast to a citywide high school dropout figure of nearly 30%. The passing percentage for all classes taken was 80%, with approximately 150 students enrolled in college classes each year.

Of the first incoming class, 58 of 60 senior class students successfully completed all RCT requirements by the end of their third year, with a 100% pass rate in writing, a 98.3% pass rate in mathematics. As a consequence, 54 of these students received their high school diplomas in June, 1988, resulting in a 90% graduation rate. All graduates received college acceptance, with 85% planning to attend four-year institutions of higher education, and remaining 15% planning to enroll in two year colleges. As of June, 1988, 80% had planned to attend the City University of New York (CUNY), 15% were to attend the State University of New York (SUNY), and 5% were to continue their studies at private colleges.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In light of the above description of the IHS student population, we welcome your responses to the following: 1. Are we moving toward a more generic approach to the definition of at-risk: i.e. "those not achieving potential"? 2. Are you aware of other programs for students who are at risk due to limited English proficiency? 3. What other approaches have been used successfully with immigrant students?

EXPLORING TRANSFER

Speech delivered by Janet Lieberman, Vassar College, October 5, 1989

"Exploring Transfer" is a two year-four year college collaborative designed to increase the number of urban and minority students who transfer from community colleges to senior colleges. As an outgrowth of the Ford Foundation Transfer Opportunities Program, LaGuardia and Vassar College planned and administered a joint, five week, summer institute for 25-50 community college students, held on the Vassar campus. The program features high standards, hard work, enriched support services and a peer residential experience. Students enroll in two out of three team taught courses for a total of seven Vassar credits. Everyone lives in Vassar housing; a Vassar faculty member serves as a housefellow and two four year college students function as peer advisors. Their counsel creates a support group where students study together and share ideas.

The structure is a mini college with its own faculty, its own courses and budget. Academically, the program reflects Vassar's rigorous standards. The residential setting encourages a social cohesion; the two faculties and LaGuardia students become a learning community, breaking down the usual barriers between faculty and students. Students emerge from the program stimulated by the team teaching in interdisciplinary classes, sobered by the amount of work required, and awed by the dedication to learning of the Vassar environment. The summer experience introduces many two year students to campus college life and offers them a baccalaureate option, which they had previously never considered. Minority students recognize that they could transfer and succeed in a prestigious, four year setting.

When the program was originally conceptualized this partnership had specific goals. The institutions involved shared common academic, ethical and social values and the aim was to forge new connections: between public and private educational institutions, between two and four year colleges, among faculties in different disciplines, and between previous experiences and possibilities. Vassar wanted to change the students' attitudes toward four year private colleges, expressed by "This Vassar is not for me."

Both institutions saw an environmental experience as the catalyst to accomplish the desired transition. United by a common purpose, the process evolved very smoothly. There were no formal articulation agreements, no course transfer guides, merely exchanges of information and joint faculty conferences. All students and faculty volunteered for the program. At the community college level, faculty recommended students, wrote letters of support and talked informally to project administrators about students' performance. We interviewed all students and each one filled out a shortened Vassar application which included a writing sample. The faculty involved held an all day evaluation meeting to select students for the program. Faculty members from both colleges worked together, seeking a match of interests

and talents in developing courses to be offered, and then everyone lived together on the Vassar campus for five pressured weeks.

We have accomplished our primary objective of increasing the transfer rates. Our statistics attest to the success of the program. At least 70% of our cohort transferred, thirty are now at Vassar, two at Middlebury, others at Cornell and at New York University. We now recognize certain human, educational and organizational concepts and we can propose a successful model which may be adapted on other campuses.

First and foremost, at the community college level the program needs support and leadership at the top. The president and deans must sponsor the program, make it a college wide effort, and see it as important in the college image. It helps to have a centralized locus of power. Community colleges which have a history of receptivity to new ideas, will be more successful. Younger community colleges are more flexible; the leadership and the president's ability to dedicate resources to the program to make it work are necessary for success.

Next, set an agenda to engage and reward community college faculty. This is a faculty driven model, fueled by community college motivation to maximize student potential and to wipe out the negative stereotypes. At LaGuardia, key faculty assumed leadership within their college and with their peers to recruit students, design courses, and encourage their colleagues to join in the teaching process and share the rewards of participation. A network of influential two and four year faculty is a sine qua non for replication.

Everyone engaged in the program must have confidence that the selected students can succeed. Even after selection for the program, community college students need continuing reassurance, and one on one attention to complete their applications. The students' ambivalence results in delayed applications, and the participating faculty need time, patience, and fortitude to continue encouraging the applicants.

The collaborative institutions need a group of faculty eager for new challenges in a different pedagogical environment. To match 2 and 4 year faculty whose knowledge and disciplines complement each other is a tricky task. Faculty from each institution must have enough self esteem to withstand observation and questioning by their peers. These teachers also need the willingness to re-examine their classroom behaviors.

For all faculty engaged in the program, participation represents a significant element of sacrifice, either personal, financial or both. The program is demanding; one faculty member compared it to being on a SWAT team, another to climbing a mountain, being exhausted and exhilarated after the climb was over. In spite of the intensity, faculty find it rewarding; they experience great satisfaction and return to their respective institutions to speak glowingly about their summer experience. The ripple effect has brought an increased number of students and faculty applications each year. The ultimate test of success has been having professors return year after year.

Finally, each college must accept the other as an equal. Vassar reached out to understand the needs of LaGuardia faculty and students without comprising their high academic standards and LaGuardia personnel made great efforts to select the appropriate students and to smooth the process of collaboration.

The mini college which was created is now five years old and has deepened our knowledge and understanding about collaboration. The program proves that a summer experience where faculty and students share academic and social growth is a motivating one and that two year college students will apply to four year colleges when they are convinced by personal experience that they can succeed.

We learned that the power of the site changes behavior and aspirations. A residential experience with rigorous academic demands and peer and faculty support, generates a remarkable group cohesiveness. Study and learning patterns change under these influences, as Uri Treisman observed at Berkeley. These learning conditions enable two year students to meet four year college standards.

Team teaching provides an unusually enriching dimension for both students and faculty. It turns the classroom into a multidimensional interchange. Working in the program changes faculty's expectations at the home institution. Our results show that community college faculty demanded more of their regular students after the summer experience, and Vassar faculty commented that the program changed their approach to the classroom.

Some critical questions regarding college transfer follow. We welcome your responses.

1. At your institution, who is transferring?
   a. When do you provide information about transfer?
   b. When do you load instructional energy?
2. Do you know if transferring students succeed?
3. If so, what resources did they use?
4. Is the transfer problem really a reflection of the math program?
5. How does transfer fit into your mission?
6. What is the role of community college in transfer?
7. Which students are at risk in community college?
8. Should there be a transfer track in community college?
9. Do you know any exemplary programs?

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